

Family & Children's Services

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Child Protective Services aims for every child to have a permanent sense of belonging in a nurturing family that provides for good physical and mental health, a safe environment, a quality education, and hope for the future. To help realize this vision, CPS is available at all times to receive reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, and then to conduct prompt investigative assessments. If abuse or neglect is determined, our desire is to preserve the family structure—when safe to do so—using additional home-based, family-centered services. These services allow abused and neglected children to remain safely with their families, rather than be placed into foster care.

- 2,328 child neglect/abuse reports received
- 1,767 child neglect/abuse reports investigated involving 3,560 children
- 30% investigations substantiated
- 475 abusive and neglectful families received comprehensive services including case management
- 95% of children who received services remained with their families

In the more severe cases of alleged child abuse, the **Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Catawba County** is utilized by CPS to interview children. The CAC is designed to minimize the trauma which children can suffer during the investigation and intervention process by limiting the number of interviews a child must go through and by providing a safe, child-friendly environment for the interviews to take place with all of the community partners involved present. This process also strengthens informed case management decisions between the community partners.



CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY CENTER



FAMILY PRESERVATION

Family Preservation and Intensive Family Preservation Services provide home-based ser-



vices to families to help them keep their children in their own homes. To receive these voluntary services, which last from six weeks up to three months, parents work with a social worker so that the children, who may be at imminent risk for out-of-home placement, may remain at home. The focus is on stabilizing the family, in which neglect, abuse, dependency, delinquency or undisciplined behavior has occurred.

The **Reunification Program** provides intensive services to parents who have lost their children to the custody of Social Services for reasons of substance abuse and/or other causative factors. "The social worker in this program assists parents in either sustaining their recovery from substance abuse or resolving other issues that brought their children into foster care." The goal of this program is to help the parents to be reunited with their children who have been in foster care or relative placement. The social worker may provide these services, which are voluntary, up to six months with the family.

- 59 families/108 children served by the three programs
- 95 children remaining or reunited with their families

PERMANENCY PLANNING

Permanency Planning aims to provide a safe, permanent living arrangement within 12 months for children who enter agency custody. This plan can include rehabilitation, strengthening and reuniting for the family or adoption to a family that gives security, good health, adequate nutrition, a safe environment, a quality education and hope for the future.

Foster Care

Foster Care offers substitute care for children separated from their families because of abuse, neglect or dependency. Our goal is for no child to remain in the foster care system for more than 12 months before going into a living situation that offers a permanent sense of belonging in a family—biological or adoptive.

- 138 children entered agency custody
- 186 average monthly number of children in custody
- 294 children served in 2002-2003

- 94 children in licensed foster family homes
- 29 children in group homes and institutions
- 171 children in other placements including adoption and relatives

Therapeutic Foster Care

Therapeutic Foster Care provides family-based treatment for hard to place youth in Social Services' custody. These youth have histories of severe emotional and/or behavioral problems and have not typically been placed within a family setting. Through the utilization of a comprehensive system of ongoing training and support, successful treatment and care has been provided for many of Catawba County's most needy youth. This has also resulted in several youth that have completed the program being able to achieve permanent placements or enter into independent living.

- 12 licensed Therapeutic foster homes
- 42 youth placed in Therapeutic foster homes
- 6 Therapeutic Foster Care training series occurred
- Approximately 40 youth received Therapeutic foster care case consultation in order to stabilize placements
- 4 Therapeutic foster care youth are in the adoption process, 2 are in permanent foster-to-adopt homes

Family Builders of Catawba Valley



Family Builders of Catawba Valley offers foster care and adoption services; resource family services; foster home licensure; and post-adoptive services. Family Builders holds a *Resource Family Information Meeting* every month to help raise awareness of the great need for permanent homes for Catawba County's waiting children and to give guests

the opportunity to learn more about becoming a resource family. In 2002-2003, FBCV hosted 181 guests at its Resource Family Information Meetings.

Resource Family Services includes the *Group Preparation Selection – Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (GPS-MAPP)*, a special training program that allows families, with the guidance of the agency, to evalu-



ate their strengths and needs for a variety of parenting options. Offered six times in 2002-2003, 83 participants completed this 30-hour training for prospective adoptive and foster families.

Adoption Services oversees the adoption process from recruiting families to finalizing adoptions. Partnering with Children's Home Society of North Carolina allows for more aggressive recruitment of placement resources locally, across the state and nationwide. Post-adoption clinical services provide support to adoptive families to preserve the adoption and sustain the family. Post-adoption services are voluntary.

- 45 Agency children referred for adoptive placement
- 41 Agency children prepared and placed for adoption
- 21 Agency children's adoptions finalized
- 19 independent, step-parent and relative adoptions finalized (Children not in agency custody)
- 28 newly licensed foster homes
- 43 families studied and approved for adoptive placement
- 32 children served through post-adoption clinical services

Foster Home Licensure handles recruitment, training and supervision of foster homes to assure safe and secure temporary care for children. Catawba County's 80 licensed foster homes served 168 children in 2002-03.

PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The **Prevention Programs** exist to promote safety and self-sufficiency for families through education and the prevention of teen pregnancy, family violence and academic underachievement.

H.E.A.R.T.

H.E.A.R.T., Hilltop Education and Resources Together, is a family activity center operating in Longview. H.E.A.R.T.'s school enrichment programs contribute to academic and attendance improvement at the elementary and middle school level for over

82% of the 62 youths attending regularly. Longview residents visit H.E.A.R.T. to access programs in literacy, adolescent pregnancy prevention, violence prevention and family activities.

Nurturing Program

The Nurturing Program is a series of parenting courses divided into classes depending on the child's age. Course lengths vary from 12 to 23 weeks. Topics include: setting up routines; how to praise and redirect; how to use time-out; giving choices and consequences; helping children like themselves; and teaching children about self-protection.

- 101 graduates (97%) from one year ago have not had substantiated Child Protective Services reports

TEEN UP and Upward Connection

The TEEN UP and Upward Connection programs, offered year-round for youth ages 9-17, focus on community service, career development, and goal-setting activities while aiming to reduce teen pregnancy and to address other risk-taking behaviors. Cultural arts, outdoor adventures, and college tours are regular components along with a structured curriculum tailored to changing trends among today's youth.

- 397 students served
- 100% of students did not become pregnant or cause a pregnancy

Early Childhood Support Team

The Early Childhood Support Team works with daycare centers to provide support to children and families, while helping to identify and provide services needed by the child prior to entering school. ECST services to daycare centers include: consultation, training and resources on issues such as behavior management and developmentally appropriate child activities. Other services include individual and family therapy and coordination of resources.

- 3,532 children in 87 childcare centers served by ECST
- 40 children received intensive services by ECST social workers
- 100% of students sampled demonstrated improved kindergarten readiness

School Social Work - DHR Teams

School social workers provided services to 14 elementary schools through a multi-disciplinary Department of Human Resources (DHR) Team. The DHR teams offer social work, health and mental health services to address the health, psychological and psychosocial issues, which can interfere with a child's ability to learn in the school setting. DHR Social Work served 512 students resulting in a:

- 99.5% attendance rate
- 100% parent involvement rate
- 94.5% academic success rate
- 100% behavior compliance rate

Catawba Valley High School – Totally Teens-CVHS

A Clinical social worker at Catawba Valley High School's Totally Teens-CVHS provides individual, family and group therapy, as well as coordination of resources for students in an alternative school setting.

- 46 students at Totally Teens-CVHS received intensive social work services resulting in 79% of high school and 50% of middle school students successfully completing the school year.

Family Conferencing Program

Family Conferencing is a decision-making process involving families, neighbors, community leaders and members, and public agencies that is used in child welfare cases. The purpose of the conferencing is to develop partnerships among those involved to protect, nurture and safeguard children and other family members by building on the strengths of the family and their community. The program is structured so that families can exercise a meaningful voice in the treatment plan for their cases. Emphasis is given to preparing family members and professionals, weighting conference participation toward the family, respecting the culture of the family, and ensuring timely approval and implementation of plans.

- 71 conferences held
- 97% of children whose parents were involved in Family Conferencing remained at home with parents or with a relative
- Of 31 cases referred to CPS with substance abuse issues, 96% of those families involved with Family Conferencing did not re-abuse during a six-month follow-up period
- 86% of families referred for child abuse and involved in Family Conferencing had no new CPS reports on original issues